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WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method, comprising the steps of:

providing a set of predetermined function definitions
which are different; and

preparing   a   project   definition,   said   project
definition including:

a plurality of function portions which each correspond
to one of said function definitions in said set, and which
each define at least one input port and at least one output
port   that   are   functionally   related   according   to   the
corresponding function definition;

a further portion which includes a source portion
identifying   a   data   source   and   defining   an   output   port
through which data from the data source can be produced,
and which includes a destination portion identifying a data
destination and defining an input port through which data
can be supplied to the data destination, data from said
data   source   being   transferred   to   said   source   portion
through a network; and

binding information which includes binding portions
that each associate a respective said input port with one
of said output ports.


2.   A method according to Claim 1, including the step
of configuring said network to include a portion of the
Internet.


3.   A method according to Claim 1, including the step
of selecting locations for said data source and said source
portion to be physically remote.

4.   A method according to Claim 1, wherein said data from said data source is in a compressed format; and including the step of causing said source portion to uncompress said data before outputting said data through said output port of said source portion.

5.   A method according to Claim 1, including the step of effecting said transfer of said data through said network in a manner conforming to a public communication protocol.

6.   A method according to Claim 5, including the step of selecting as said public communication protocol the eXtensible Markup Language (XML) protocol.

7.   A method according to Claim 5, including the step of selecting as said public communication protocol the File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

8.  A computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program which recognizes a set of predetermined function definitions that are different, said program being operable when executed to facilitate preparation of a project

5      definition which includes:

a plurality of function portions which each correspond to one of said function definitions in said set, and which each define at least one input port and at least one output port that are functionally related according to the

10     corresponding function definition;

a further portion which includes a source portion identifying a data source and defining an output port through which data from the data source can be produced, and which includes a destination portion identifying a data

15     destination and defining an input port through which data can be supplied to the data destination, data from said data source being transferred to said source portion through a network; and

binding information which includes binding portions

20     that each associate a respective said input port with one of said output ports.


9.  A computer-readable medium according to Claim 8, wherein said data from said data source is in a compressed

25     format; and wherein said program is operable when executed to cause said source portion to uncompress said data before outputting said data through said output port of said source portion.


30     10.  A computer-readable medium according to Claim 8, wherein said program is operable when executed to facilitate said transfer of said data through said network in a manner conforming to a public communication protocol.

11. A computer-readable medium according to Claim 10, wherein said program is operable when executed to facilitate said transfer of said data through said network in a manner conforming with the eXtensible Markup Language (XML) protocol.

12. A computer-readable medium according to Claim 10, wherein said program is operable when executed to facilitate said transfer of said data through said network in a manner conforming with the File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

13.   A method, comprising the steps of:

providing a set of predetermined function definitions which are different; and

5          preparing   a   project   definition,   said   project definition including:

a plurality of function portions which each correspond to one of said function definitions in said set, and which each define at least one input port and at least one output
10   port   that   are   functionally   related   according   to   the corresponding function definition;

a further portion which includes a source portion identifying a data source and defining an output port through which data from the data source can be produced,
15   and which includes a destination portion identifying a data destination and defining an input port through which data can be supplied to the data destination, data received through said input port of said destination portion being transferred from said destination portion to said data
20   destination through a network; and

binding information which includes binding portions that each associate a respective said input port with one of said output ports.

25          14.   A method according to Claim 13, including the step of configuring said network to include a portion of the Internet.

15.   A method according to Claim 13, including the
30   step of selecting locations for said destination portion and said data destination which are physically remote.

16. A method according to Claim 13, including the step of causing said destination portion to convert data received through said input port thereof to a compressed format prior to transfer of the data through said network to said data destination.

17. A method according to Claim 13, including the step of causing said destination portion to effect said transfer of data through said network to said data destination in a manner conforming to a public communication protocol.

18. A method according to Claim 17, including the step of selecting as said public communication protocol the eXtensible Markup Language (XML) protocol.

19. A method according to Claim 17, including the step of selecting as said public communication protocol the File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

20.    A computer-readable medium encoded with a computer-program which recognizes a set of predetermined function definitions that are different, said program being operable when executed to facilitate preparation of a
5    project definition which includes:

a plurality of function portions which each correspond to one of said function definitions in said set, and which each define at least one input port and at least one output port that are functionally related according to the
10    corresponding function definition;

a further portion which includes a source portion identifying a data source and defining an output port through which data from the data source can be produced, and which includes a destination portion identifying a data
15    destination and defining an input port through which data can be supplied to the data destination, data received through said input port of said destination portion being transferred from said destination portion to said data destination through a network; and

20    binding information which includes binding portions that each associate a respective said input port with one of said output ports.

21.    A computer-readable medium according to Claim 20,
25    wherein said program is operable when executed to cause said destination portion to convert data received through said input port thereof to a compressed format prior to transfer of the data through said network to said data destination.

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22.  A computer-readable medium according to Claim 20, wherein said program is operable when executed to effect said transfer of data through said network to said data destination in a manner conforming to a public

5       communication protocol.


23.  A computer-readable medium according to Claim 22, wherein said program is operable when executed to use as said public communication protocol the eXtensible Markup

10     Language (XML) protocol.


24.  A computer-readable medium according to Claim 22, wherein said program is operable when executed to use as said public communication protocol the File Transfer

15     Protocol (FTP).